



PRÉVENU D'AVANCE :-)

ERIC DECASTRO | MIKE HENTZ

KUNSTRAUM DREIEICH
08. SEPTEMBER - 13. OKTOBER 2012



MIKE HENTZ / ERIC DECASTRO COMMON WORKS

GREENBACKS, EUROPEAN CRISIS, DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE

The artistic dialogue between Mike Hentz and Eric Decastro revolves around the interpretable-in-many-ways colour, green. The dialogue is a ping-pong game in the fields of painting, sculpture and installation. Among other works, they collaboratively produced green pictures, which the artists call 'Greenbacks', the colloquial name for the dollar bill. Should not art be the new currency in the time of the 'European Crisis'?

A large, green object that Eric Decastro made in six weeks, takes up this theme in a satirical manner. The erection, and respectively the lack of it, refers to the economic process. The sculpture is also simultaneously the symbol for the euro's current lack of Viagra.

Have we lived too high a life, drawn too much on limited resources? Can it go on as before at all? We can think at our leisure about the 'déjeuner sur l'herbe' in the park that, thanks to a rolling lawn, is now in the Kunstraum Dreieich. Here a tableau vivant is created with a wonderful pear tree trunk that is also a cornucopia on which we have relied too much.

Perhaps we are all still too green (behind the ears). Green apples, too, are sour and evidence of unripeness.

*Mike Hentz, Eric Decastro, Ludwig Seyfarth.
Translated by Heather Allen*

'FLATWARE' IN THE WORK OF MIKE HENTZ BY SERGEI KLEIN

For ages I've considered Mike Hentz's term 'flatware' a clever wordplay on software, hardware and silverware, re-applied to describe his paintover work. Until one day when I decided to look the word up in the dictionary, to a certain degree of dismay finding it out to be the American expression for table silver. On a second (and further) thought, however, it started to make perfect sense. Here's why.

In Mike's personal (and voluminous) work vocabulary (which, during his days in the now-legendary group, minus delta t, had once been published as separate book) 'flatware' defines his unique take on two-dimensional art pieces: painting, collage and mixed technique drawing in one tea cup. Interestingly, a subtraction of an extra dimension for Hentz, notorious for his video-captured live painting performances/lectures, proved to be far from a regressive 'neo-classicist' dead-end trap, into which certain, once radical, artists tend to fall with age. In retrospect, this reduction paradoxically added an extra dimension to Hentz's envelope-pushing art praxis, marking a new turn, a further development for this artist, famous for his provocative performances, groundbreaking (uncensored and live) TV/video art, and polymediatric syncretism.

In his text for the exhibition, Da Bao: Austrian Art Made in China (2010), Hentz points out that the live painting table-top video performances (lasting up to 12 hrs, resulting in kilos of flatware) have, actually, been rooted all along in his workbook praxis: *"More than 30 years ago I started out with paintovers. I used books or catalogues of other artists and converted them into my private everyday life workbooks, they got new coinage. I appropriated them, gave them a more personal identity, with my diary registrations, notes, drafts, addresses and collages they became art objects. Several times friend and collector, Carl Vogel (former president of the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg), wanted to buy my workbooks. I rejected, the books having a much too personal meaning to me just to be sold away. This inspired me to realize a specific format, based on my workbooks..."*

In spite of being two-dimensional, and by definition 'flat', flatware pieces are, like Mike, meaty and, well, prominent: the shapes and forms salient, bulging, protruding from the



Top
Live video performance
COMA, Berlin 2009

Bottom
Working Book Mike Hentz, 2011
Reworking of the book *The Great Unreal* by Taiyo Onorato and Nico Krebs





Top, bottom left
Live video performance, COMA,
Berlin 2009



paper, relief-like (sometimes literally so, as in the case of Hentz's appropriation of old maps). It is tempting to go so far as setting his seemingly brute, primitivist (perhaps, indigenous-art-inspired), child-like drawings next to those by, an unlikely choice, Bhagavan Sri Radjnish Osho – a very prolific painter in his own right (although remembered mostly for other stuff) – a comparison Hentz will probably jeer at. Like the odious guru's, Mike's are primary geometric shapes: circles, triangles, squares, as well as curves, doodles and scribbling, often found in subconscious paper-daubing (like my mum while talking to someone on the phone at length). The child parallel would also seem not so far-fetched to those who have seen the art of Oja-Lutfieh, the maestro's baby daughter and a busy doodler: definitely a source of reference for the artist (the main difference being, of course, the sharp consciousness of Mike's method).

However, flatware does inherit the original culture-pricking intention of the 20th century avantgarde: appropriation and reconstruction of media-produced images, rendering their messages virtually diametrically opposite. Yet, in Hentz's case, there is a marked progression. It is quite interesting to analyze the very images the artist chooses to appropriate: unlike the S.I., he never selects advertising



Left
Tableau Vivant, Mindpirates, Berlin
2012
music installation performance

Top
Green Phase, 1977
Slideshow / installation /
video performance

or political slogans (which under modern new order have broadened and blurred to near transparency or 'predator'-like invisibility). Instead he opts for artefacts of days and dictatorships gone by, the stuff more commonly nowadays found at flea markets or in dumpster heaps. His preference is for discarded images of waned showbiz stars (the anonymous actress on the exhibition's flyer), old relief maps of territories which now exist as newly-founded states (Estonian pictures), forsaken propaganda reprints (the hilarious Reichstag seizure painting by an obscure Polish author, signed: The first Love Parade, Mike Hentz, 2012), or former Communist leaders (Brezhnev, Mao, Stalin).

Hentz elaborates: "The Communist leaders are a bit misleading. I also have technical drawings 200 years old till today, as well as national-socialist. A lot of them are connected to propaganda or yellow press of the 30's-40's (the cinema star is Tattler newspaper, 1935), as well as technical drawings. In China, I used nudes and letters, plus traditional Chinese ink drawings to rework. For an exhibition in Latvia I asked famous artists to give me works to overwork, but, with an exception of one guy, none of them were ready. Picasso and others can't say no any more, so I did it. The sources are most diverse. I loved computer



Top
Workpage, 1997/2012
Chinese paper, acrylic, ink, thermoprint
149 x 218 cm

Top right, bottom right
Apples, 2012. Chinese paper, acrylic,
ink, thermoprint, 246 x 125 cm

The Sound of Dreams, 2012
Serigraphy one-offs; ink, silkscreen on
chinese paper, 145 x 75 cm

programming schedules and sets of the 60's, and use them till today, mixing them with traditional Arab ornaments. The marriage or collage of content is in no way justified only by the result - looks good or great - and then discussions start, like: why did you use that? What gives you the right to mix it? Et cetera..."

Analyzing Mike Hentz strategies of laying watercolors down on paper, one might discern two different trends. The first is the meticulous pointillistic dotting with different colors, which is very similar to natural rhizomatic forces like moss - a very artistic phenomena in its own right, creating fascinating patterns on surfaces it (not unlike Hentz's paintovers) occupies (better yet: invades). The other is a similarity with molecules one might witness creating colorful shapes and juxtapositions while observing tissue through a microscope. In fact, as we pointed out above, the flatware pieces are precisely such a zoom-in on forsaken or forgotten artefacts of culture and history, a magnified image of human voluntary amnesia. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Mike's DJ nick, Mikrom, a combination of 'microscope' and 'microbe', but also bringing to mind 'metronome': just check the groove, the pace, the rhythm of his painting.



Mike Hentz's oeuvre has always impressed by the sheer volume of quality work produced – he currently has two different flatware exhibitions, both quite different in purpose & content, in Berlin alone (the other one, Male Icons, recently finishing its Estonian run). Not to mention heavy involvement with Berlin's Performance Month, throughout the course of which Hentz performed, lectured, conducted a cheese club, and also took the time to stage a 7-hour Tableau Vivant polymedia suite, reflecting on beauty, at the Mindpirates space in Kreuzberg. During the very exhausting two-day-plus-12-hrs-a-day montage of Flatware From China, someone jokingly remarked: "Hey, Mike! You eat and drink for three!", the artist retorting with the nonchalant and matter-of-fact: "True. But I also work for three!" And this rings absolutely accurate and right on the money. Hentz is a one-man trio, grooving and cooking with impeccably pulsing swing.

The flatware is on the table. You may now kiss (or fuck) the cook. The meal is served. Lick your joints clean!

The text is a shortened version of an essay in: <http://alienklein.livejournal.com/52908.html>

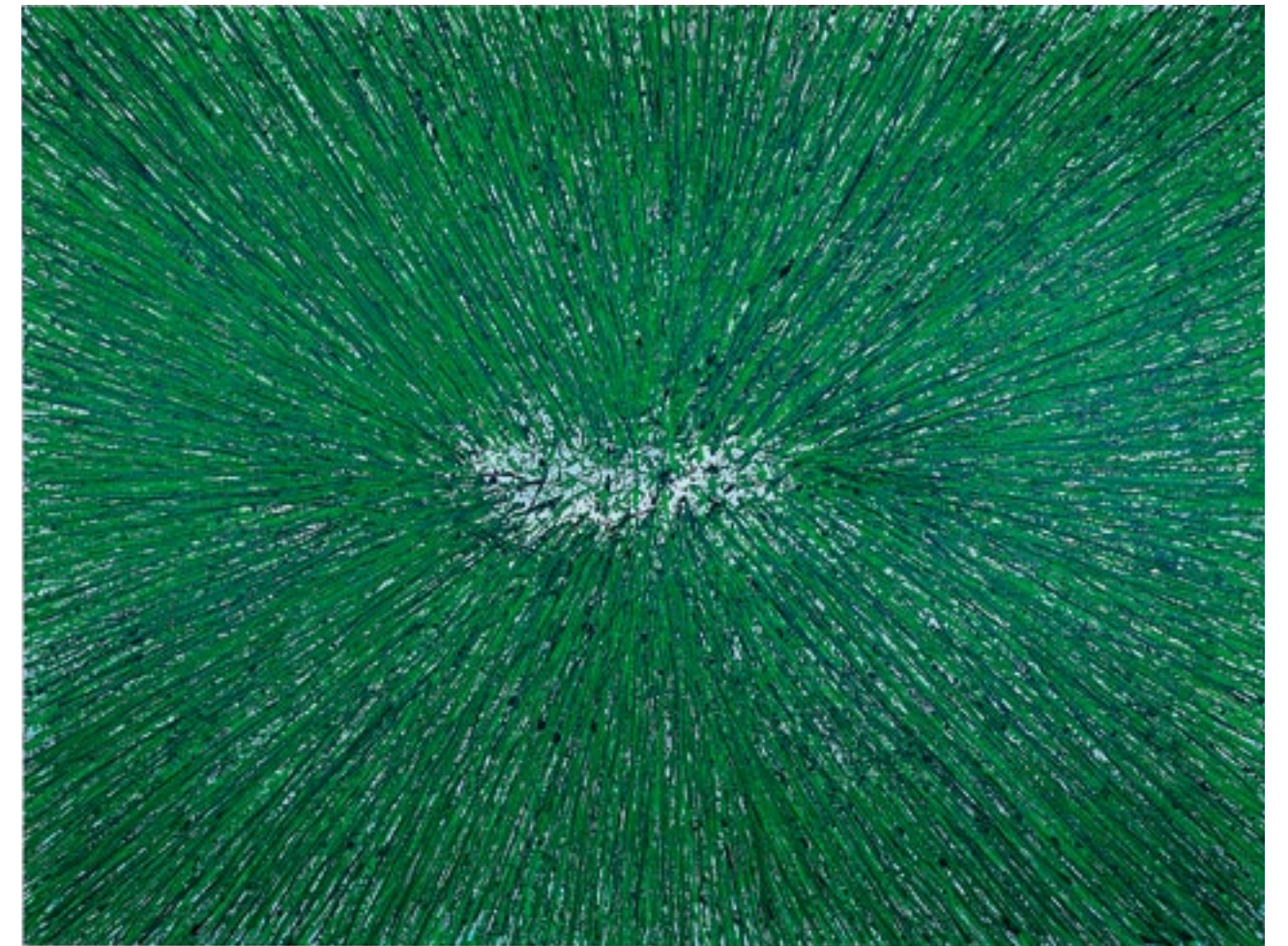


Left
Mike Hentz: *Mokshbush*, 2011
Ink, pencil, 21 x 30 cm



Right
Mike Hentz: *Green Beirut*, 1982 / 2012
Chinese paper, acrylic, ink, thermoprint, 123 x 246 cm



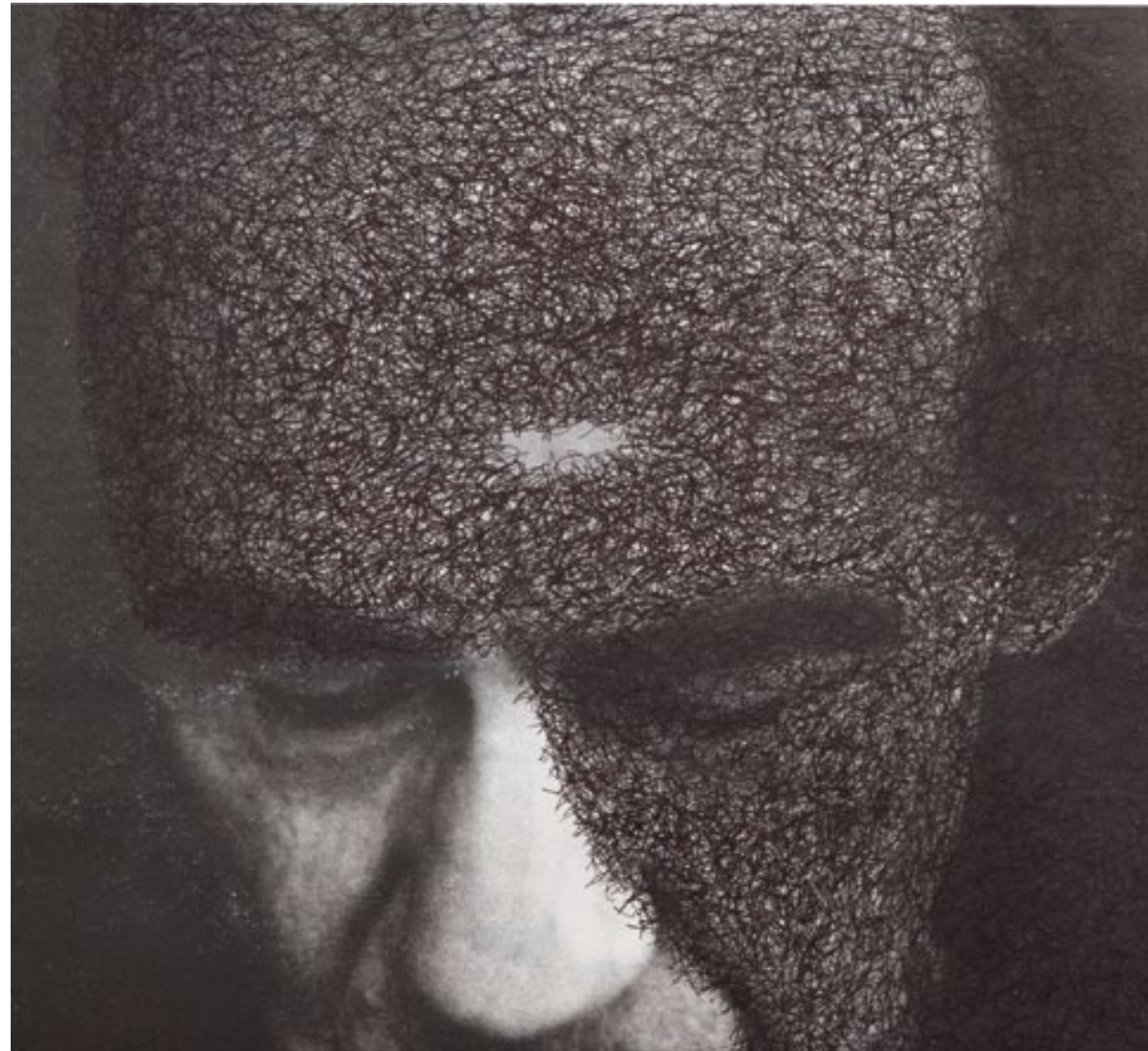


Left
 Eric Decastro: *Batu Apoi 4 42'0" North 6'0 East*, 2010
 Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 190 cm

Right
 Eric Decastro: *No aliens in sight*, 2012
 Acrylic on canvas, 190 x 250 cm

Left

Eric Decastro: *Das dritte Auge oder die Rückkehr zur Weisheit und Erkenntnis*, 2011
Watercolor and drawing pen on paper, 26 x 22 cm



Right

Eric Decastro: *Lignes infinies interrompues dans le NYSE le 11 Septembre*, 2012
Acrylic on cardboard, 41 x 30,5 cm





Left page

Top Mike Hentz: *Chinese Mountains*, 2010
Chinese paper, acrylic, ink, 250 x 130 cm

Bottom Mike Hentz: *Tartuffo 1*, 2010
Chinese paper, acrylic, ink, 105 x 200 cm



Right page

Mike Hentz: *Blutkoerperchen*, 2010
Chinese paper, acrylic, ink, 105 x 200 cm





Previous spread

Mike Hentz: *Chinese Wall*, Berlin 2012
 Installation, 6 x 3,5 m
 Specialgalerie Peppi Guggenheim International

This spread

Mike Hentz: *Chinese Wall* (details), Berlin 2012



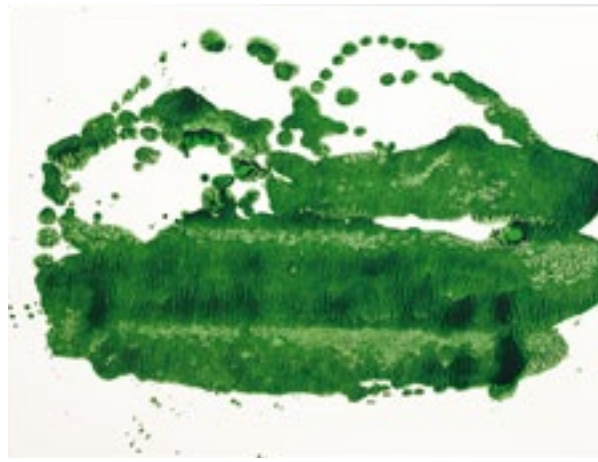
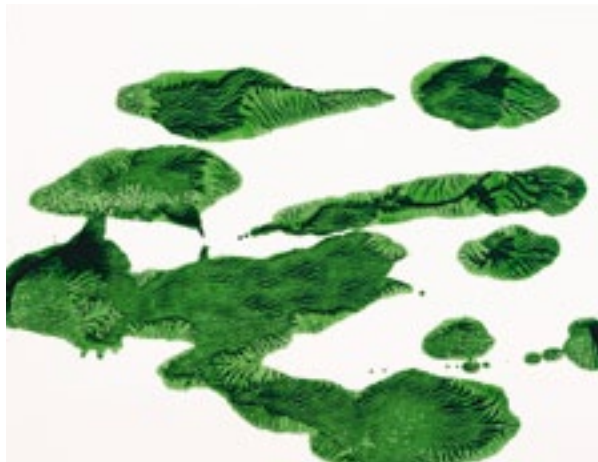


Left

Eric Decastro: *Conscius coram*, 2012
Acryl auf Leinwand, 50 x 40 cm

Right

Mike Hentz: *Voegel*, 2010
Chinese paper, ink, acrylic, 102 x 200 cm



Top left *Greenbacks Nr. 3, step 1* Decastro
Acrylic pigment on paper, 50 x 65 cm
Collaboration Eric Decastro | Mike Hentz

Middle *Greenbacks Nr. 3, step 2* Hentz

Bottom left *Greenbacks Nr. 21, step 1* Decastro,
step 2 Hentz, step 3 Decastro

Top right *Greenbacks Nr. 7, step 1* Decastro, 2012

Middle *Greenbacks Nr. 7, step 2* Hentz, 2012

Bottom right *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 2012
Green, objects, mixed media, 5 x 9 m
Collaboration Eric Decastro | Mike Hentz

Right page

Grün hinter den Ohren (detail), 2012
Acrylic, oil, mixed media, 120 x 180 x 7 cm



THE WORK OF ERIC DECASTRO

BY DAVID GALLOWAY

Eric Decastro is a passionate, intuitive dancer, or he takes the stage from time to time as a jazz saxophonist. Furthermore, each of the distinctive idioms that Decastro has developed is accompanied by its own choreography: quick, slow, staccato, syncopated, aggressive, delicate, abrupt, sensual. The results, achieved with as many as thirty layers of paint, often follow the all-over principle of swirls, sweeping lines and fine meshes, but the more typical works are those which move about a centre.

Sometimes the energy released here seems to draw inward, at other times to thrust toward the edges of the canvas and then beyond. In either case, the viewer is swept up into a pulsing vortex of color. (One can also think in terms of implosion and explosion here.) For Decastro, the center is a point of focus and meditative calm: that which the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, described as ‘a still point in a turning world.’ These might be regarded as the artist’s most philosophical works. Others draw their strength from the interplay of color itself, which may take the form of relief-like structures or ‘eroded’ surfaces. Many of the latter result from the so-called ‘wash out’ technique, whereby the still-damp canvas is literally showered down, leaving only the dried outlines formed at the edges of an area of paint, resembling nothing so much as delicate pen-and-ink drawings. Repeated again and again, the process results in finely filigreed structures. Often similar effects are produced by sanding down the surface of a work. What results in these more minimalist compositions is the feeling of ancient frescos, of images that have faded and blurred and are no long decipherable - of messages concealed like palimpsests.

Surveying Decastro’s oeuvre, it might be said to vacillate between maximalism and minimalism, between action and reflection. Each work, however, bears the history of its own creation, representing a kind of Rorschach of the painterly process. (In a variation of the classic Rorschach test, Decastro has created ‘diptychs’ by pressing one still-damp canvas – like a printing block - against an unpainted one.) The artist’s experimental drive seems unquenchable, as does the energy that so conspicuously flows into his works. Dance, spirituality and painting join here in a remarkable symbiosis.



MIKE HENTZ

Born 1954 in Irvington, New Jersey, United States.

Swiss / American nationality. Lives and works in Berlin as a painter / musician / visual and polymedia artist. Professorship art academy Hamburg (1989–1997) and Stuttgart (2003–2007). EurekaLabel 1993 for University TV, Mediaprice Karlsruhe 2003, Organizer of MedusaFestival 1997/2003 in Poland, council member of RATV (Riga Radio and Television school) 2007, Riseeba Riga New media and film department (research leader) since 2010. Works in Collection CC Vogel, Falkenberg, Patrick Frey, ZKM Karlsruhe, Museum Ludwig Koeln et al.

Projects:
Documenta 1986 (*Minus Delta T and Documenta Radio*). Documenta 1992 (*Piazza Virtuale*). Ars electronica 1986/1990/1991. *Defi Science Mental*, *Padli Noidlt*, *Frigo*, *Code Public*, *Radio Bellevue*, *Van Gogh TV*, *Odyssee*, *Hermesgroup*, *University TV Network*, *Eman network*, *Infermental Video Magazine*, *Garage TV*, *Hexpo*, *Ponton Media Lab*.

ERIC DECASTRO

Born 1960 in Creusot, Burgundy, France.

1974–1984 paintings (still life, landscape), collage, wooden sculptures. 1986–2000 foundation of IT / software development company. 1996–2000 Various studio exhibitions of abstract works with acrylic on wood and canvas. 2000–2009 selling of the company and focusing on painting.

Exhibitions:
Solo: 2012 *Liberation of Thinking*, Galerie Schütte, Essen-Kettwig. *Picaelatura* Kunstraum Bernusstrasse, Galerie Marina Grützmaier, Frankfurt/Main. 2011 *Disxtenczehn*, Kunstraum Dreieich, Galerie Sylvia Bernhardt, Wiesbaden. 2010 *Fall into the Blue*, Galerie Susanne Swiridoff, Schwäbisch-Hall. *Der Sturz ins Bild*, Galerie Ewald Schrade, Schloss Mochental, Ehingen/Ulm
Group: 2012 *The 170th*, Galerie Schütte, Essen-Kettwig with Thomas Kohl, Wolfgang Bühler. 2011 *Another World*, Kunstraum Dreieich with Jürgen Klauke, Sabine Groß, William Engelen. *Exposition entre amis*, Kunstraum Dreieich with Florian Heinke, Sandra Mann, Dieter Vieg. *limits and desperate*, Gallery Gail Schoentag, Sag Harbor, NY, USA with Björn Melhus, Yves Netzhammer, Anke Röhrscheid, Nathalie Grenzhäuser.



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Mike Hentz: *Crownqueen*, 2011
Ink and lacquer on reprography on paper, 20 x 30 cm

ERIC DECASTRO : WWW.DECASTRO-ART.COM

MIKE HENTZ : WWW.MIKEHENTZ.COM

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